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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [RU](#) [GG](#)  
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: SITREP 15: LITTLE OR NO CHANGE ON THE  
GROUND

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (U) Summary. Observers are not reporting any real movement to withdraw by Russian troops in Georgia. According to the Georgian press, the Russians say they intend to set up a double line of checkpoints around South Ossetia with a buffer zone in between; however, Gori will not be in that zone. High level visitors, including FM Stubb representing the OSCE chairman in office, Bob Simmons from the NATO International Staff, and the Romanian President are in Tbilisi; SACEUR General Craddock and USAID Director Henrietta Fore are also on the ground. Senators Lieberman and Graham completed their visits August 20. Georgian prisoners taken by the Russians in Poti have not been released. The French Ambassador visited Sachkere, where Georgian troops remain in their barracks and Russian troops have not tried again to enter. Russian troops detained the French Ambassador in Gori for three hours on August 21 before being allowed to return to Tbilisi; the French Ambassador accompanied two Amcit children who had been trapped in northern Georgia and were unable to return to their parents in the U.S. End Summary.

RUSSIANS STAY PUT  
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¶2. (U) According to the OSCE mission here, there is no evidence of any movement by the Russian army that indicates an intention to withdraw from Georgian territory. Matyas Eorsi of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe traveled to Gori on August 20 and also found no sign of a withdrawal. Eorsi said he had seen looted houses in Gori and reminded the Russians that as an occupying power they bear responsibility for stopping such crimes. A Reuters correspondent saw trucks moving toward the Roki Tunnel, but no armored vehicles were in the convoy. The Russians have reopened checkpoints at various locations around Gori and Poti. They are reported to be "digging in" at other points, and maintain the checkpoint at Igoeti, just north of Tbilisi, that was the scene of protests earlier in the week. Explosions were heard all day August 20 at the Senaki base. UNOMIG has not yet resumed patrols in some areas, including lower Gali, but hopes to soon. The German Ambassador told us that Georgian police are guarding the Inguri Dam.

SACHKERE SITUATION SAME, FRENCH AMBASSADOR DETAINED IN GORI  
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¶3. (C) Eric Fournier, the French ambassador to Georgia, told us that he was stopped by a Russian checkpoint on the west side of Gori, on his way to Tbilisi, and detained for three hours. After numerous calls to Moscow and Russian generals in the area, both from Fournier and from Paris, he was allowed to proceed to Tbilisi. In Fournier's vehicle were two Amcit children and their uncle who had been stuck in the northern Georgian village of Chiatura. The safety of the children has been the focus of Rep Chris Smith's visit to Tbilisi. Ambassador Fournier had been in Sachkere, where Georgian troops are still in their base despite Russian

attempts to remove them. The German Ambassador visited Gori on August 20th and reported being delayed at a Russian checkpoint for an hour.

14. (C) The British Ambassador told us that Foreign Secretary Miliband had productive meetings with Georgian leaders and that he expects his government to push for extensive economic support for reconstruction. In meetings with Saakashvili, the Foreign Secretary urged the Georgians to resist further Russian provocations. Miliband encouraged PM Gurgenzidze to attend a September conference in London to raise investment capital. Miliband also met with members of civil society and the opposition who told him that they support Saakashvili's government, but will raise questions related to the government's management of the crisis when the Russians had gone.

#### 26.6 MILLION IN DAMAGES TO COAST GUARD PROPERTY

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14. (U) The Georgia Coast Guard estimates its losses of buildings and equipment in Poti at USD 26.6 million. A large part of the equipment, including a USD 3 million "GRIF" boat sunk in Poti by the Russians, was procured with U.S. assistance.

#### CORDON SANITAIRE FOR SOUTH OSSETIA

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15. (U) The Georgian press is reporting that according to Anatoly Nogovitsin, deputy chief of the general staff of the Russian armed forces, the Russians will establish two lines

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of checkpoints, one on the border of South Ossetia and one at the "line of the zone of responsibility of the Russian peacekeepers." The forward line will be manned by 272 soldiers at eight checkpoints. A buffer zone will be maintained between the two lines. Nogovitsin said the town of Gori will not be included in the zone.

#### SOUTH OSSETIAN DEATH TOLL AT 133

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16. (U) According to an official of the Russian prosecutor general's office, 133 South Ossetian civilians died in the recent conflict. Human Rights Watch had earlier described South Ossetian claims of 2,000 civilian deaths as exaggerated. The Russian prosecutor is reportedly initiating criminal cases in connection with some deaths.

#### MORE FOREST FIRES SET

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17. (U) According to the press, two Russian helicopters are reported to have dropped incendiary bombs over a forested area near the village of Kiketi, not far from Tbilisi. The fire was reportedly quickly contained. These reports have not been confirmed.

#### U.S. SENATORS SHOW SUPPORT

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18. (SBU) U.S. Senators Joe Lieberman and Lindsey Graham held talks with Georgian officials in Tbilisi on August 20. Lieberman said it is important for the world's democracies to stand in solidarity with Georgia. The two senators called for more robust military assistance to Georgia, including anti-tank and anti-aircraft equipment.

#### GEORGIAN PRISONERS STILL IN CUSTODY

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19. (U) The Georgian soldiers taken prisoner in Poti on August 19 remain in Russian custody as of mid-day August 21. There has been no word on hostages taken in Tskhinvali.

#### HIGH LEVEL VISITORS

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¶10. (U) Romanian President Traian Basescu visited Tbilisi August 21. A member of NATO's international staff, Robert Simmons, arrived August 20. OSCE Chairman in Office Stubb is also in Tbilisi to bring the first two of 20 additional monitors for the OSCE mission. OSCE reports that they are still unable to go into South Ossetia since the Russians refuse to guarantee the safety of OSCE monitors. SACEUR General Craddock and USAID Administrator Fore are in Tbilisi for an August 21-22 visit.

#### AZERIS PROMISE SHORT-TERM HELP

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¶11. (C) A Deputy Minister of Energy told Emboffs on August 20 that Minister of Energy Alexander Khetaguri has returned from Baku with a promise from the Azeris to fill Georgia's needs for gas, electricity, food and other goods in the short term.  
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